DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 134 021 FL 008 335

AUTHOR Omar, Margaret K.
TITLE Levantine and Egyptian Arabic. Comparative Study.
INSTITUTION Foreign Service (Dept. of State), Washington, D.C. Foreign Service Inst.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 61p.
AVAILABLE FROM Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Stock No. 044-000-01629-0, $1.20)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$3.50 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Arabic; Grammar; *Instructional Materials; *Language Instruction; Language Usage; *Language Variation; Morphology (Languages); Mutual Intelligibility; Pronunciation; *Regional Dialects; Second Language Learning; Sociolinguistics; Standard Spoken Usage; Syntax; Uncommonly Taught Languages; Vocabulary
IDENTIFIERS *Egyptian Arabic; *Levantine Arabic

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this booklet is to describe the major differences between the Levantine (Palestinian and Lebanese) and Egyptian (Cairene) dialects of Arabic, with some references to other geographical varieties of these dialects. It is designed to provide help to persons who have learned either one dialect or the other and need to transfer to the other. A good mastery of the two dialects is therefore assumed. The differences are discussed at four levels: (1) pronunciation (consonants, vowels, stress, and intonation); (2) morphology (verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives and numbers); (3) syntax (question words, demonstrative pronouns, and past tense); and (4) vocabulary (verbs, prepositions, other words, and idioms). Section five discusses social usage, and an appendix contains special terms, a glossary, and variable words in dialects. (Author/AM)

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FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

LEVANTINE & EGYPTIAN ARABIC

COMPARATIVE STUDY

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COMPARATIVE STUDY

MARGARET K. OMAR
Washington, D.C.

1976

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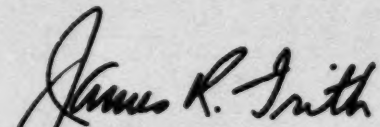
For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402 - Price $1.20
Stock No. 044-000-01629-0

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE
BASIC COURSE SERIES
Edited by
MARIANNE LEHR ADAMS

PREFACE

Levantine and Egyptian Arabic *is designed to provide help and guidance to persons who have learned either Levantine or Egyptian Arabic and who now have need to use the other. The manual focuses on special features of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and social usage. It helps the student recognize correspondences and directs attention to those sometimes deceptive correspondences which may lead to interference in the transfer from one dialect to another.*

Planned and written by Dr. Margaret K. Omar, the manual has profited by suggestions from Dr. James A. Snow of FSI and Dr. Ernest Abdel-Massih, University of Michigan, both of whom read the manuscript in draft. Resource persons who provided examples of speech usage were Sari Ansari, Hanna Farha, Souria Haddad, Ziad Kayyal, Naim Owais and Grace Shahid. Camera copy of the manuscript was prepared by Maryko S. Deemer.



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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this booklet is to describe the major differences between the Levantine (Palestinian and Lebanese) and Egyptian (Cairene) dialects of Arabic (with some references to other geographical varieties of these dialects). These two dialects are the most widely studied by American students, who frequently need to transfer from one to the other. It is assumed that the reader of this book has a good mastery of one of the two dialects.

The dialects are almost entirely mutually intelligible for native speakers but since the differences are more pronounced at the "basic" level (the negative, the future tense, the demonstrative pronouns, etc.) they often pose a great problem for a person whose command of Arabic is still at an elementary or intermediate stage.

The differences are discussed at four levels: pronunciation; words and affixes (morphology); phrases and sentences (syntax); and vocabulary. This is intended to help the student isolate and overcome some of the most predictable difficulties.

* * * * *

I would like to express my thanks to the following persons for their assistance as native-speaking informants in this project: Mr. Sari Ansari, Mr. Hanna Farha, Miss Souria Haddad, Mr. Ziad Kayyal, Mr. Naim Owais, and Miss Grace Shahid. I also thank Dr. James Snow for his guidance and suggestions.

THE TRANSCRIPTION SYSTEM

The following is a list of the symbols used in the transcription of the sounds of both dialects and their approximate equivalents in English. Note that a few special symbols have been used.

Arabic Letter	Symbol	Approximate English Equivalent
ء	'	the catch in the throat between the vowels of oh-oh
ا	a, aa	ranges from a in cat to a in father; may be long or short
ب	b	b in bet
د	d	d in dead
ض	ḍ	d pronounced with velarized "emphasis"
—	ee	ai in bait; usually occurs as a long vowel
ف	f	f in fee
(ج)	g	g in get
غ	ɣ	'gh', a voiced velar friction consonant
ه	h	h in head
ح	H	the harsh 'h', a pharyngeal consonant
ي	i, ii	if short, i in bit, except at the end of words; at the end of a word or when long, ee in meet
ج	j	j in jet
ك	k	k in king
ل	l	l in let
—	ɬ	l in ball; the "emphatic" l
م	m	m in man
ن	n	n in net
—	oo	oa in coat; usually occurs as a long vowel
ق	q	like the c in cool but farther back in the throat
ر	r	a tongue-tip trilled r when single; a trilled r when doubled

Arabic Letter	Symbol	Approximate English Equivalent
س	s	s in sit
ص	ṣ	s pronounced with velarized emphasis
ش	š	sh in ship
ت	t	t in tip
ط	ṭ	t pronounced with velarized emphasis
و	u, uu	if short, u in put, except at the end of words; at the end of a word or when long, oo in cool
و	w	w in wet
خ	x	'kh', a voiceless velar friction consonant
ي	y	y in yet
ز	z	z in zero
ظ	ẓ	z pronounced with velarized emphasis
ع	9	the "ain", a voiced pharyngeal consonant
ث	θ	th in think (occurs in classicized words)

LEVANTINE AND EGYPTIAN ARABIC

I

PRONUNCIATION

A. Consonants.

The most obvious difference between the pronunciation of these dialects, the one cited first by virtually anyone who is asked, is the difference in the consona : /j/, the "jiim" in Classical Arabic, which is pronounced as a hard /g/ in Cairene Egyptian.

Levantine	Egyptian	
jdiid	gidiid	'new'
ijtimaa9	igtimaa9	'meeting'
intaaj	intaag	'production'
najjaar	naggaar	'carpenter'

Both Levantine and Egyptian render the /q/ ("qaaf") of Classical Arabic as a glottal stop, /'/. (Some dialects in Jordan render it as /g/). However, in a few words, one dialect generally retains the classical pronunciation whereas the other does not. There are only a few of these words, but some are quite frequent in occurrence.

Levantine	Egyptian	
ba9ti'id	ba9taqid	'I believe'
9alaa'aat	9ilaqaat	'relations'
'araar (qaraar)	qaraar	'decision'
qaṣir	'aṣr	'palace'
'aanuun	qanuun	'law'
ista'aal	istaqaal	'he resigned'

In a formalized context, Levantine speakers often use the /q/ pronunciation.

The Levantine dialect preserves the classical pronunciation of the consonant /θ/ (the voiceless 'th') as an educated variant. This is never found in Egyptian. Listed are some common words heard in Beirut; in the Jordanian dialect, this is an extremely common sound and a regular part of the sound system in some areas.

Levantine	Egyptian	
wiθi', byuuθa'	wisiq, biyusaq	'to trust'
tamθiil (tamsiil)	tamsiil	'representation'
aaθaar (aasaar)	asaar	'antiquities'
aθiina	atiina	'Athens'
maθalan (matalan) (masalan)	masalan	'for example'

The Egyptian dialect allows no more than two consonants to occur together in a cluster. The Levantine dialect allows up to three occasionally, most often when the first two consonants of the cluster are the same.

Levantine	Egyptian	
byíftikir (byíftkir)	biyiftíkir	'he thinks'
striiH	istarayyaH	'rest (m)'
marrteen	marriteen	'two times'
ímmha	ummáha	'her mother'
šá''tak	ša''ítak	'your apartment'
kullha	kulláha	'all of it (f)'

Note in the examples above that in the Egyptian dialect, when a word which ends in two consonants is suffixed with a pronoun, the vowel which is inserted is stressed. It is not stressed in Levantine.

The Levantine dialect has many words which begin with a two-consonant cluster; this is not permitted in Egyptian.

Levantine	Egyptian	
druus	duruus	'lessons'
tlaate	talaata	'three'
lHamdílla	ilHamdu lilláah	'thanks be to God'
ktaab	kitaab	'book'

The Egyptian dialect has many words which end in a consonant cluster; this is less common in Levantine (the pronunciation varies in different regions). The final /r/ and /l/ of a consonant cluster are pronounced voiceless in Egyptian. The underlined vowels are usually considered "helping vowels" in Levantine.

Levantine	Egyptian	
šuɣu^1	šuɣl	'work'
ibin	ibn	'son'
rubu9	rub9	'quarter'
ḍuhur	ḍuhr	'noon'
Humur	Humr	'red'
maṣir	maṣr	'Egypt'
šahir	šahr	'month'
sahl (sahil)	sahl	'easy'
bint (binit)	bint	'girl'
xubz (xubuz)	9eeš	'bread'

In both dialects an extra vowel is sometimes used between words. This has been traditionally analyzed, however, in a different way in each dialect:

In the Levantine dialect, if a word ends in a consonant and the next word begins with two consonants (causing three consonants in a row), the vowel /i/ is inserted, attached to the second word.

In Egyptian, the vowel /i/ is added after a word which ends in two consonants when the next word begins with a consonant (to prevent three consonants from coming together). The vowel is not heard as clearly in Egyptian, however, and is usually not written as part of a word. Note that when this helping vowel is used, the next word may begin with a consonant cluster, but this is the only case in which this happens in Egyptian.

Levantine	Egyptian	
bint ikbiire	bint^i kbiira	'a big girl'
laazim inšuufo	laazim nišuufu	'We must see him.'
tlat isniin	talat siniin	'three years'
naas iktaar	naas kitiir	'many people'
ba9id bukra	ba9d^i bukra	'the day after tomorrow'
ilbint fimaṣir	ilbint^i fmaṣr	'The girl is in Egypt.'

B. Vowels.

Most vowels have a tendency to be slightly higher and more clipped in Egyptian pronunciation than in Levantine. This gives the effect of a rapid, almost staccato rhythm in Egyptian, and a comparatively slower, sometimes even languid pace in Levantine.

The short /a/ or /u/ in Classical Arabic and Levantine is frequently a short /i/ in Egyptian.

Levantine	Egyptian	
9inwaan (9unwaan)	9inwaan	'address'
Hajj	Higg	'pilgrimage'
safaara	sifaara	'embassy'
aswad	iswid	'black'
waaHad (waaHid)	waaHid	'one'
lubnaan	libnaan	'Lebanon'
raaHit (raaHat)	raaHit	'she went'

The final /a/ (which is usually the feminine ending) is retained in its classical pronunciation in Egyptian. In Levantine, it is often pronounced as /e/, except in words which contain emphatic or back consonants or /r/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
waaHde (waHde)	waHda	'one'
huwwe	huwwa	'he'
humme	humma	'they'
jamiile	gamiila	'beautiful'
bayḍa (beeḍa)	beeḍa	'white'
furṣa	furṣa	'opportunity'
saa9a	saa9a	'hour'

The short /u/ is the same in both dialects, except for the suffix meaning 'him' or 'his'. In some dialects of Levantine, this latter vowel is /o/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
šufto (šuftu)	šuftu	'I saw him.'
inno	innu	'that he'
beeto	beetu	'his house'

Levantine	Egyptian	
minšaano	9ašaanu	'for him'
ismo	ismu	'his name'

In Egyptian, a long vowel is shortened if the word contains a consonant cluster later; it is usually retained long in Levantine.

Levantine	Egyptian	
waaHde (waHde)	waHda	'one'
saafarna	safirna	'we traveled'
tmaanye	tamanya	'eight'
raayHa	rayHa	'going (f)'
ṣaaHbi	ṣaHbi	'my friend'

In Egyptian, long vowels are affected by the addition of certain suffixes which begin with a consonant. The vowel is shortened, and sometimes the quality also changes.

Levantine	Egyptian	
nšuufkum	nišufku	'We see you (p).'
loonha	lunha	'her color'
jaabhum	gabhum	'He brought them.'
bišiilhum	biyšilhum	'He carries them.'
beetna	bitna	'our house'

In the Levantine dialect, the definite article /il-/ (/l-/) is transposed to /li-/ if followed by a word which begins with a consonant cluster.

Levantine	Egyptian	
likweet	ilkuweet	'Kuwait'
liktaab	ilkitaab	'the book'
liwlaad	ilwilaad	'the children'
likbiir	ilkibiir	'the big one'

In the Levantine dialect, the position of a vowel and a consonant of a word stem are switched under certain conditions:

This switching occurs in the 'they' and 'you (p)' forms of the imperfect tense, Form I verb (before the final vowel) unless the stem vowel of the word is /a/ (as in /byišrab/). Note the difference in stress also; it occurs before the switch.

(Levantine Base)	Levantine	Egyptian	
byuktub	byúkutbu	biyiktíbu	'they write'
byudrus	byúdursu	biyidrísu	'they study'
btudrus	btúdursu	bitidrísu	'you (p) study'
btuʂruf	btúʂurfu	bitiʂrífu	'you (p) spend'
byišrab	byíšrabu	biyišrábu	'they drink'

It also occurs with the suffix 'him (or 'it') when this is added to an imperfect tense, Form I verb. This is compared to a suffix which begins with a consonant.

(Levantine Base)	Levantine	Egyptian	
byuškur	byúšukro (byuškúrha)	biyuškúru (biyuškúrha)	'he thanks him' ('he thanks her')
batruk	báturko (batrúkhum)	batrúku (batrúkhum)	'I leave him' ('I leave them')
byuʂruf	byúʂurfo (byuʂrúfha)	biyiʂrífu (biyiʂrífha)	'he spends it' ('he spends it (f)')

Nouns which have a consonant cluster before the feminine suffix undergo this switch before adding possessive suffixes which begin with a vowel. These are compared to a suffix which begins with a consonant.

(Levantine Base)	Levantine	Egyptian	
numra	númirto (numrítha)	nimrítu (nimrítha)	'his number' ('her number')
furʂa	fúriʂto	furʂítu	'his opportunity'
	fúriʂtak	furʂítak	'your (m) opportunity'
	fúriʂti	furʂíti	'my opportunity'
	(furʂítha)	(furʂítha)	('her opportunity')

C. Stress.

Both dialects follow the same rules for stress except that Levantine Arabic can have stress on the third-to-last syllable (it stresses the word before its last consonant cluster). Egyptian can have stress only as far back as the second-to-last syllable when a word contains a consonant cluster (otherwise the stress can be farther back).

Examples of different stress:

Levantine	Egyptian	
byí'daru	biyi'dáru	'they are able'
mádrase	madrása	'school'
tfáḍḍali	itfaḍḍáli	'Go ahead (f).'
tínzali	tinzíli	'you (f) go down'

Examples of same stress:

Levantine	Egyptian	
rúHna	rúHna	'we went'
ṭálabu	ṭálabu	'they requested'
9árabi	9árabi	'Arabic'
ḍárabat	ḍárabit	'she hit'

In both dialects stress falls on the long vowel in a word. In Levantine, if a word has more than one long vowel, stress falls on the second one. In Egyptian, only one long vowel is allowed, so all but the last are shortened. (The result is the same stress.)

Levantine	Egyptian	
9alaa'áat	9ilaqáat	'relations'
šaafúuni	šafúuni	'They saw me.'
ta'aaríir	ta'arír	'reports'
mabsuuṭíin	mabsuṭíin	'happy'

D. Intonation.

Differences in intonation do not interfere with understanding between these two dialects, but it is worth noting that the Levantine dialect employs a far greater intonation range than does Egyptian. Levantine, especially Syrian, sounds higher pitched in general, and this is especially noticeable in questions and exclamations. For emphasis, Levantine speakers use a falsetto, much like a restrained loud voice. Egyptian intonation is lower and more even.

II

WORDS AND AFFIXES

A. Verbs.

1. The Progressive Markers. In the Levantine dialect, the participle /9am-/ may be used with an imperfect which has the prefix /b-/ (/bi-/). /b-/ refers to uncompleted action (including habitual or sometimes future), while /9am-/ refers to on-going action, and is usually used together with /b-/.

In Cairene Egyptian, /b-/ (/bi-/) is used for both meanings. (In Upper Egypt, /9am-/ is used for both). /b-/ and /9am-/ are never used together.

Levantine	Egyptian	
šuu 9am-bti9mal	biti9mil eeh	'What are you doing?'
9am-byiktub	biyiktib	'He is writing.'

The Levantine dialect (in Lebanon) has changed the /b-/ prefix to /m-/ (/mi-/) in the 'we' form of the verb.

Levantine	Egyptian	
minruuH	binruuH	'we go'
minkuun	binkuun	'we are'

In the Levantine dialect, the 'he' and 'they' form of the imperfect verb loses the /y-/ if the verb has a long vowel or a doubled consonant.

Levantine	Egyptian	
bizuur	biyzuur	'he visits'
bifakkir	biyfakkar	'he thinks'
bi'uulu	biy'uulu	'they say'
bisaafru	biysaafru	'they travel'
bišiil	biyšiil	'he carries'

2. The Future Marker. In Levantine, the future particle is /raH-/; in Egyptian, it is /Ha-/ (/H-/). (It is used less often in Levantine than in Egyptian).

Levantine	Egyptian	
raH-asaafir bukra	H-asaafir bukra	'I'll travel tomorrow.'
eemta raH-yirja9	Ha-yirga9 imta	'When will he return?'
bnimši ssaa9a waHde	Ha-nimši ssaa9a waHda	'We'll leave at one o'clock.'

3. The Negative. In both dialects the negative has two forms, one for equational sentences and one for verbs.

In Levantine, the negative for equational sentences is /miš/ (/muu/) or a set of conjugated words (most common in Lebanon). In Egyptian, it is /miš/. Egyptian also uses /miš/ to negate the future tense.

Levantine		Egyptian	
manno	'he is not'	miš	
mannha	'she is not'		
mannhum	'they are not'		
mannak	'you (m) are not'		
mannik	'you (f) are not'		
mannkum	'you (p) are not'		
manni	'I am not'		
manna	'we are not'		
huwwe miš hoon. (huwwe manno hoon.)		huwwa miš hina	'He is not here.'
miš ma9i		miš ma9aaya	'/It's/ not with me.'
manna faaḍyiin bukra (miš faaḍyiin bukra)		miš faḍyiin bukra	'We're not free tomorrow.'
maa raH-yiji		miš Ha-yiigi	'He will not come.'

In Levantine, the negative for verbs is the word /maa/ placed before the verb. In Egyptian, the negative is a prefix-suffix combination, /ma-/ /-š/, placed around the verb.

Levantine	Egyptian	
maa raaH	ma-raH-š	'He did not go.'
maa kaan ma9i	ma-kan-š ma9aaya	'He was not with me.'
maa 9am-byíktub	ma-byiktíb-š	'He is not writing.'
maa truuH	ma-truH-š	'Don't go (m).'
maa trúuHi	ma-truHíi-š	'Don't go (f).'

In the Egyptian dialect, when a pronoun suffix is used, some forms are changed when enclosed in a negative structure. Note that short vowels in the suffixes are also lengthened.

Levantine	(Egyptian Base)	Egyptian	
maa šúfto	(šúftu)	ma-šuftuhúu-š	'I did not see him.'
maa šúftik	(šúftik)	ma-šuftikíi-š	'I did not see you (f).'
maa šúftkum	(šuftúku)	ma-šuftukúu-š	'I did not see you (p).'
maa šáafni	(šáfni)	ma-šafníi-š	'He did not see me.'
maa byiktúblo	(biyiktíblu)	ma-byiktiblúu-š	'He does not write to him.'
maa byiktúbilha	(biyiktibláha)	ma-byiktiblahúa-š	'He does not write to her.'

This negative is used, in both dialects, with some non-verbs. In Egyptian, it is also used with personal pronouns and a few nouns.

Levantine	Egyptian	
maa 9indi	ma-9andii-š	'I do not have'
maa 9indha	ma-9andahaa-š	'she does not have'

Levantine	Egyptian	
maa 9indo	ma-9anduu-š	'he does not have'
maa fii	ma-fii-š	'There isn't any.'
ismo miš aHmad	ma-smuu-š aHmad	'His name is not Ahmad.'
huwwe miš hoon (manno hoon)	ma-huwwaa-š hina	'He is not here.'

(The use of this negative with nouns and personal pronouns in Egyptian is optional, and not as common as the use of /miš/.)

4. The Passive. The passive is marked in the Levantine dialect by the syllable /in/ prefixed to the perfect tense and infixed in the imperfect tense (Form VII in Classical Arabic). In Egyptian, the syllable is /it/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
in9amal	it9amal	'It was done.'
indarbat	itḍarabit	'She was hit.'
raH-yinkisir (raH-yiniksir)	Ha-yitkisir	'It will be broken.'

B. Nouns.

1. The Dual. In both dialects, most nouns are dualized but a few are not. In Egyptian, there are more which are not. These will have to be learned as separate items; it is a matter of style.

Levantine	Egyptian	
rijjaaleen	itneen riggaala	'two men'
m9allmeen	itneen mu9allimiin	'two teachers'
duulaareen	itneen dulaar	'two dollars'
liirteen	itneen liira	'two pounds' (money)

C. Pronouns.

1. Personal Pronouns. The Levantine word for 'we' is /niHna/; the Egyptian form is /iHna/. The Egyptian word for 'they' is /humma/; the Levantine word is /humme/ or /hinne/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
niHna min hoon	iHna min hina	'We are from here.'
hinne min lubnaan	humma min libnaan	'They are from Lebanon.'

2. Pronoun Objects. In Egyptian, the object pronoun for 'you (p)' has been changed to /-ku/; in Levantine, it is /-kum/ (/-kun/). The object pronoun for 'them' in Egyptian is /-hum/; in Levantine, it is /-hum/ or /-hun/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
šúftkun	šuftúku	'I saw you (p).'
raaH la 9índkun	raaH 9andúku	'He went to your house.'
ba9atilkum šii	ba9atluku Haaga	'Did he send you anything?'
šúfthun 'abl išwayy	šuftúhum 'abl[1] šwayya	'I saw them a little while ago.'
aja má9hun	gih ma9áahum	'He came with them.'

When both the direct and indirect objects are used with a verb, the Levantine dialect uses the word /iyyaa-/ with the direct object. The Egyptian dialect suffixes both pronouns to the word, the direct object first.

Levantine	Egyptian	
jibli yyaa	gibhúuli	'Bring it (m) to me.'
mumkin tištriili yyaaha	mumkin tištiriháali	'Can you buy it (f) for me?'
maa jibtillak iyyaahum	ma-gibtuhumlák-š	'I didn't get them for you.'

D. Adjectives.

1. Agreement. In both dialects, adjectives may have the /-iin/ masculine plural suffix, or an irregular plural form. In Levantine, they may take the /-aat/ feminine plural suffix as well (this is especially common in Jordanian); this is not used in Egyptian.

Levantine	Egyptian	
m9allmaat Hilwaat (Hilwiin)	mu9allimaat Hilwiin	'pretty teachers (f)'
banaat jamiilaat (jamiiliin)	banaat gumaal	'beautiful girls'

2. Diminuitive. The Egyptian dialect has used the Classical Arabic diminuitive pattern for some adjectives. The most common are listed. They take the /-a/ and /-iin/ suffixes.

Levantine	Egyptian	
ʒɣiir	ʂuɣayyar	'small'
'ariib	'urayyib	'near'; 'soon'
'aliil	'ulayyil	'few'
rafii9	rufayya9	'thin'
'aʂiir	'uʂayyar	'short'

E. Numbers.

1. The Numbers 1-10.

Levantine	Egyptian	
waaHad, waHde	waaHid, waHda	'one'
tneen, tinteen	itneen	'two'
tlaate	talaata	'three'
arba9a	arba9a	'four'
xamse	xamsa	'five'
sitte	sitta	'six'
sab9a	sab9a	'seven'
tmaanye	tamanya	'eight'
tis9a	tis9a	'nine'
9ašra	9ašara	'ten'

Note that the Levantine dialect has two forms for 'one' and 'two'; the Egyptian dialect has two forms only for the number 'one'.

Both dialects use a 'short form' numeral before counted nouns.

Levantine	Egyptian	
tlat marraat	talat marraat	'three times'
arba9 marraat	arba9 marraat	'four times'
xamis marraat	xamas marraat	'five times'
sitt marraat	sitt[1] marraat	'six times'
sabi9 marraat	saba9 marraat	'seven times'

Levantine	Egyptian	
tman marraat	taman marraat	'eight times'
tisi9 marraat	tisa9 marraat	'nine times'
9ašar marraat	9ašar marraat	'ten times'

2. The Teens. There are slight differences in the form of the teen numbers. The Levantine forms are more abbreviated, and keep the /9/; they have the extra syllable /-ar/ before counted nouns.

Levantine	Egyptian	
Hḍa9š	Hiḍaašar	'eleven'
ṯna9š	iṯnaašar	'twelve'
tlaṯṯa9š	talaṯṯaašar	'thirteen'
arba9ṯa9š	arbaʔṯaašar	'fourteen'
xamisṯa9s	xamasṯaašar	'fifteen'
siṯṯa9š	siṯṯaašar	'sixteen'
sabi9ṯa9š	saba9ṯaašar	'seventeen'
tmanṯa9š	tamanṯaašar	'eighteen'
tisi9ṯa9š	tisa9ṯaašar	'nineteen'

3. The Hundreds. The Egyptian dialect uses a special vowel pattern for the numerals which are compounded with the word 'hundred'; the Levantine dialect uses the "short form" numeral.

Levantine	Egyptian	
tlatmiyye	tultumiyya	'300'
arba9miyye	rub9umiyya	'400'
xamismiyye	xumsumiyya	'500'
sittmiyye	suttumiyya	'600'
sabi9miyye	sub9umiyya	'700'
tmanmiyye	tumnumiyya	'800'
tisi9miyye	tus9umiyya	'900'

Both dialects use the form /miit/ before a counted noun.

Other number forms are approximately the same in both dialects.

III

PHRASES AND SENTENCES

A. Question Words. Some question words have a very different form in the two dialects. They are also placed in a different part of the sentence. In the Levantine dialect, question words regularly come at the beginning of a sentence. In Egyptian, the question words regularly come at the end of a short or simple sentence, and at the beginning of a sentence only if it is long or complex.

Levantine	Egyptian	
šuu	eeh	'what'
leeš	leeh	'why'
eemta (eemtiin)	imta	'when'
miin	miin	'who'
kiif	izzaay	'how'
ween (feen)	feen	'where'
kam	kaam	'how many'
'addeeš	'add^{i}eeh	'how much'
šuu ismak	ismak eeh	'What is your name?'
leeš ruHit	ruHt^{i} leeh	'Why did you go?'
eemta raH-tiji	Ha-tiigi imta	'When will she come?'
miin inte	inta miin	'Who are you?'
kiif 9milto	9amaltu zzaay	'How did you do it?'
kiifak	izzayyak*	'How are you?'
ween saakin	saakin feen	'Where do you live?'
'addeeš biddak	9aawiz 'add^{i} eeh	'How much do you want?'
'addeeš ṣarlak hoon	ba'aalak 'add^{i} eeh hina	'How long have you been here?'

*Note that the form of /izzaay/ was changed to /izzayy-/ with the suffix. The three forms are /izzáyyak/, /izzáyyik/, /izzayyúkum/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
'addeeš issaa9a	issaa9a kaam	'What time is it?'
miin irrijjaal illi huniik	miin irraagil illi hinaak	'Who is the man who is over there?'
leeš maa saafart ba9d iḍḍuhur	leeh ma-safirt-iš ba9d iḍḍuhr	'Why didn't you travel in the afternoon?'

The Egyptian dialect also uses /išmi9na/ as a question word. This is derived from /eeš ma9na/, 'What is the meaning?', and since it is very casual in style, is best translated 'How come?'. It occurs only at the beginning of a sentence.

kiif jara	išmi9na	'How come?'
kiif inno heek	išmi9na kida	'How come /it is/ like that?'
kiifta maa ruHtu	išmi9na ma-ruHtuu-š	'How come you (p) didn't go?'

B. The Demonstrative Pronouns. The demonstrative pronouns in the Levantine dialect and the Egyptian dialect are different in form (the Egyptian is an abbreviated form of the words). Levantine has a separate set of demonstrative pronouns which occur alone; with a noun, the word /ha-/ is prefixed to the definite article. Egyptian has the same words for both uses, and does not differentiate between 'this' and 'that'.

Levantine	Egyptian	
haada (hayda)	da	'this (m)'
haadi (haydi)	di	'this (f)'
hadool (hawdi) (haydool)	dool	'these'
hadaak (haydaak)	da	'that (m)'
hadiik (haydiik)	di	'that (f)'
hadulaak (haydulíik)	dool	'those'
šuu hayda	eeh da	'What is this (m)?'
haydi binti	di binti	'This is my daughter.'
haydool iwlaadi	dool wilaadi	'These are my children.'

Levantine	Egyptian	
harrijjáal	irráagil da	'this man'
hassaa9a	issaa9a di	'this watch'
hannaas	innaas dool	'these people'
bi haššaari9	fiššaari9 da	'in that street'
bi haṭṭayyaara	fiṭṭayyaara di	'in that airplane'
lyoom	innahárda	'today'

The Egyptian dialect has alternate sets of forms which are rather casual in style; they are not as common as the forms above.

Levantine	Egyptian	
	dawwa(t)	'this (m)'
	diyya(t)	'this (f)'
	doola(t)	'these'
	dukha	'that (m)'
	dikha	'that (f)'
	dukhum	'those'
liktaab haada	ilkitaab dawwa	'this book'
ilbint haadi	ilbint[1] diyyat	'this girl'
innaas hadool	innaas doola	'these people'
	innaas dukhum	'those people'
hayy aHla	diyyat aHla	'This (f) is prettier.'
haydi aHla	dikha aHla	'That (f) is prettier.'

In the Egyptian dialect, a helping vowel may be used before the demonstrative pronoun (because it acts like a suffix). Sometimes this helping vowel takes the stress. Some words which end in a short vowel also have the vowel lengthened and stressed before the demonstrative pronoun. These words are not many, but they are relatively frequent and are difficult for non-Egyptians to comprehend the first few times.

Levantine	Egyptian	
bi halwá'it	filwa't[í] da	'at this time'
haššáhir	iššahr[í] da	'this month'
hassáne	issanáa di	'this year'
halmárra	ilmarráa di	'this time'
halléele	illiláa di	'tonight'
binnísbe íló	bi nisbáa lu	'with regard to him'
bi hal Haale	filHaláa di	'in this case'
bi haṭṭaríi'a	biṭṭari'áa di	'in this manner'

C. Past Time. To express 'last' as in 'last week', 'last month', etc., the Levantine dialect usually uses the classical form /maaḍi/. The Egyptian dialect uses only the phrase /illi faat/, literally, 'which has passed'. /maaḍi/ is an adjective, /faat/ is a verb; both must agree with the subject.

Levantine	Egyptian	
iššahr ilmaaḍi	iššahr illi faat	'last month'
issane lmaaḍye	issana lli faatit	'last year'
il'usbuu9 ilmaaḍi	il'usbuu9 illi faat	'last week'
issniin ilmaaḍye	issiniin illi faatu	'the past years'
ilxamiis ilmaaḍi	ilxamiis illi faat	'last Thursday'

IV

VOCABULARY

There are many vocabulary words which differ between these two dialects. Those which are best illustrated in a sentence context are presented here. Other vocabulary words are listed in the Glossary.

A. Verbs.

(1) 'to become' 'to happen'

The Levantine and Egyptian dialects use different words to express these meanings. In Levantine, both meanings are expressed with the word /ṣaar/. In Egyptian, /ba'a/ is used to mean 'become' and /Hasal/ or /gara/ to mean 'happen'.

Levantine	Egyptian	
ṣaar muhimm	ba'a muhimm	'He became important.'
ṣarlo yoomeen hoon	ba'aalu hina yomeen	'He has been here two days.' (lit., 'it has become for him')
'addeeš ṣarlak hoon	ba'aalak 'add[1] eeh hina	'How long have you been here?' ('How long has it become for you?')
šuu ṣaar	eeh illi Hasal	'What happened?'
ṣarlo šii	garaalu Haaga	'Did something happen to him?'
maa ṣarlo šii	ma-garaluu-š Haaga	'Nothing happened to him.'
šuu ṣarlak	garaalak eeh	'What happened to you?'
haššii maa ṣaar	da ma-Hasal-š	'That didn't happen.'

(2) 'to remain' 'to stay'

The Levantine dialect usually uses /ba'a/ to mean 'remain' or 'stay'; the Egyptian dialect uses /'a9ad/, literally, 'to sit'. Both dialects use /nizil/ idiomatically.

Levantine	Egyptian	
'addeeš raH-tib'a hoon	Ha-tu'9ud hina 'add[1] eeh	'How long will you stay here?'
b'iit fil'uteel yoom	'a9adt fil'uteel yoom	'I stayed in the hotel one day.'
baa'i 9inna	'aa9id 9andína	'He is staying at our house.'
nizil bi uteel	nizil fi uteel	'He stayed in a hotel.'

(3) 'to want'

The Levantine dialect uses the noun /bidd-/ (/badd-/) with possessive suffixes to express 'to want' (literally 'by his desire', 'by my desire', etc.) or, in questions, the verb (biriid/. The Egyptian dialect uses an active participle which has two variations, /9aawiz/ and /9aayiz/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
šuu biddak	9aawiz eeh	'What do you (m) want?'
baddi yyaahum	9awizhum	'I want them.'
maa biddna šii	mis 9ayziin Haaga	'We don't want anything.'
biddha yyaa	9ayzaa	'She wants it (m).'
'addeeš btriidi	9ayza 'add[1] eeh	'How much do you (f) want?'
baddi aruuH	9aayiz aruuH	'I want to go.'

(4) 'to give'

The Levantine dialect uses the classical verb /a9ṭa/; the Egyptian dialect uses /idda/. In both dialects, this verb can be used with direct or indirect object pronouns.

Levantine

	Sg.	Pl.		Sg.	Pl.
m	a9ṭa		m	bya9ṭi	
3		a9ṭu	3		bya9ṭu
f	a9ṭat		f	bta9ṭi	
m	a9ṭeet		m	bta9ṭi	
2		a9ṭeetu	2		bta9ṭu
f	a9ṭeeti		f	bta9ṭi	
1	a9ṭeet	a9ṭeena	1	ba9ṭi	mna9ṭi

Egyptian

	Sg.	Pl.		Sg.	Pl.
m	idda		m	biyiddi	
3		iddu	3		biyiddu
f	iddit		f	bitiddi	
m	iddeet		m	bitiddi	
2		iddeetu	2		bitiddu
f	iddeeti		f	bitiddi	
1	iddeet	iddeena	1	baddi	biniddi

Levantine	Egyptian	
a9ṭeeto maṣaari	idditlu filuus	'I gave him money.'
maa a9ṭeeto šii	ma-idditluu-š Haaga	'I didn't give him anything.'
mumkin ta9ṭiini šwayy	mumkin tiddiini šwayya	'Can you give me some?'
raH-na9ṭiik hayda	Ha-niddiik da	'We'll give you that.'
šuu a9ṭaak	iddaalak eeh	'What did he give you?'
'addeeš raH-ya9ṭiik	Ha-yiddiik 'add[1] eeh	'How much will he give you?'

(5) 'to come'

This verb is from the same root in both dialects, but its forms have diverged so much that frequently they are difficult to understand.

Levantine

	Sg.	Pl.		Sg.	Pl.
m	aja		m	byiji	
3		aju	3		byiji
f	ajat		f	btiji	
m	jiit		m	btiji	
2		jiitu	2		btiju
f	jiiti		f	btiji	
1	jiit	jiina	1	baji	mniji

Egyptian

	Sg.	Pl.		Sg.	Pl.
m	gih		m	biyiigi	
3		gum	3		biyiigu
f	gat		f	bitiigi	
m	geet		m	bitiigi	
2		geetu	2		bitiigu
f	geeti		f	bitiigi	
1	geet	geena	1	baagi	biniigi

The Egyptian dialect has made some changes in the negative as well.

(Levantine)

maa aja
maa ajat
maa aju

maa jiit
maa jiiti
(etc.)

Egyptian

m	ma-gaa-š	
3		ma-guu-š
f	ma-gat-š	
m	ma-git-š	
2		ma-gituu-š
f	ma-gitii-š	
1	ma-git-š	ma-ginaa-š

Levantine	Egyptian	
aju bakkiir	gum badri	'They came early.'
jiit má9o	geet ma9áa	'I came with him.'
byiji ktiir	biyiigi kitiir	'He comes often.'
leeš maa aja	ma-gaa-š leeh	'Why didn't he come?'
leeš maa (i)jiit	ma-git-š leeh	'Why didn't you (m) come?'
ba9d maa aju	lissa ma-guu-š	'They still haven't come.'
maa raH-niji	miš Ha-niigi	'We won't come.'

(6) 'look out' 'take note'

To express 'look out', 'watch out', 'pay attention', the Levantine dialect uses the phrase /diir baalak/; the Egyptian dialect uses the phrase /xud baalak/. The active participle forms are also frequently used, although Levantine uses the participle /mintibih/ as well.

Levantine	Egyptian	
diir baalak minno	xud baalak minnu	'Watch out for him.'
laazim itdiir baalak	laazim taaxud baalak	'You have to be careful.'
miš daayir baalo	miš waaxud baalu	'He isn't paying attention.'
miš daayra baalha	miš waxda balha	'She isn't paying attention.'
maa kunt mintibih	ma-kunt-iš waaxud baali	'I wasn't paying attention.'
daayir baalak	waaxud baalak	'Are you following?' /the conversation/
	waaxud baal siyadtak	'Are you following, sir?'

B. Prepositions. Some prepositions differ in form and some in usage between these two dialects.

(1) /ma9a/

In Egyptian, /ma9a/ changes its base form to /ma9aa-/ when suffixed. Note that the 'I' form is irregular.

Levantine	Egyptian	
má9o	ma9áa	'with him'
má9ha	ma9áaha	'with her'
má9hum	ma9áahum	'with them'
má9ak	ma9áak	'with you (m)'
má9ik	ma9áaki	'with you (f)'
má9kum	ma9áaku	'with you (p)'
má9i	ma9áaya	'with me'
má9na	ma9áana	'with us'

The Egyptian dialect has an alternate form for 'with', /wayya/. It is not used as often, and is very informal in style. (/wiyya/ is occasionally heard in the Levantine dialect, in a few set phrases.)

	Egyptian	
	wayyáa	'with him'
	wayyáaha	'with her'
	wayyáahum	'with them'
	wayyáak	'with you (m)'
	wayyáaki	'with you (f)'
	wayyáaku	'with you (p)'
	wayyáaya	'with me'
	wayyáana	'with us'

Levantine	Egyptian	
ta9aal ma9na	ta9aala ma9aana	'Come (m) with us.'
raH-aruuH ma9hum	H-aruuH wayyaahum	'I'll go with them.'
miin ma9ak	ma9aak miin	'Who is with you (m)?'
ma9ik maṣaari	ma9aaki filuus	'Do you (f) have money?'
jaay ma9i	gaay wayyaaya	'He's coming with me.'
ana wiyyaak	ana wayyaak	'you and me'

(2) /ʕind/

The Egyptian dialect inserts and stresses a vowel between the base word and suffixes which begin with a consonant.

Levantine	Egyptian	
ʕíndo	ʕándu	'at his house'
ʕíndha	ʕandáha	'at her house'
ʕíndhum	ʕandúhum	'at their house'
ʕíndak	ʕándak	'at your (m) house'
ʕíndik	ʕándik	'at your (f) house'
ʕíndkum	ʕandúku	'at your (p) house'
ʕíndi	ʕándi	'at my house'
ʕínna	ʕandína	'at our house'
tfaḍḍal la ʕinna	itfaḍḍal ʕandina	'Come to our house.'
ʕindi ḍyuuf	ʕandi ḍuyuuf	'I have guests.'
miin ʕindkum	ʕanduku miin	'Who is at your house?'

This word can mean 'at the home of' (like "chez" in French), or it can mean 'to have' in both dialects. The Levantine dialect also uses /il-/ to mean 'to have'.

Levantine	Egyptian	
ʕindo maṣaari ktiir	ʕandu filuus kitiir	'He has a lot of money.'
ili axx	ʕandi axx	'I have a brother.'
ʕindak fraaṭa (ṣraafe)	ʕandak fakka	'Do you have change?'
ʕindik wa'it	ʕandik wa't	'Do you (f) have time?'

(3) /ʕan/

The Levantine dialect changes the base form to /ʕann-/ before suffixes which begin with a vowel; the Egyptian uses the base form /ʕann-/ for all persons, and inserts a vowel before suffixes which begin with a consonant.

Levantine	Egyptian	
9ánno	9ánnu	'about him'
9ánha	9annáha	'about her'
9ánhum	9annúhum	'about them'
9ánnak	9ánnak	'about you (m)'
9ánnik	9ánnik	'about you (f)'
9ánkum	9annúku	'about you (p)'
9ánni	9ánni	'about me'
9ánna	9annína	'about us'
smi9t 9anha	simi9t[1] 9annaha	'I've heard of her.'
9aarfiin 9ankum	9arfiin 9annuku	'We know of you (p).'
Hakaali 9anno	Hakaali 9annu	'He told me about it.'

(4) /min/

Both dialects use /minn-/ as the base form before adding suffixes which begin with a vowel. The Egyptian dialect may use this base for suffixes which begin with consonants as well.

Levantine	Egyptian	
mínno	mínnu	'from him'
mínha	minnáha; mínha	'from her'
mínhum	minnúhum; mínhum	'from them'
mínnak	mínnak	'from you (m)'
mínnik	mínnik	'from you (f)'
mínkum	minnúku; mínku	'from you (p)'
mínni	mínni	'from me'
mínna	minnína	'from us'
huwwe akbar minha	huwwa akbar minnaha	'He is older than she.'
xaayif minkum	xaayif minnuku	'He is afraid of you (p).'

This word takes a special shape when used in some environments. In Levantine, /min/ may become /mni/ when followed by a word which begins with a consonant cluster. In Egyptian, /min/ becomes /mi-/ before the definite article /il-/ in rapid speech (it is an alternate form).

Levantine	Egyptian	
mni ssuu'	min issuu' (missuu')	'from the souk'
mni lmaHall	milmaHall	'from the place'

(5) /bi/ and /fi/

These prepositions are frequently used in both dialects with a wide variety of meanings. While they often may be used interchangeably with no real difference in meaning, as a matter of style the Levantine dialect tends to use /bi/ more often, whereas the Egyptian dialect uses /fi/. Some common phrases in which these prepositions are used are listed.

Levantine	Egyptian	
bi beetak	fi beetak	'in your house'
bi halwa'it	filwa't[1] da	'at that time'
bil'awwal	fil'awwil	'at first'
bil'aaxir	fil'aaxir	'at last, at the end'
xamse bilmiyye	xamsa filmiyya	'five percent'
marra bil'usbuu9	marra fil'usbuu9	'once a week'
huwwe bilbeet	huwwa filbeet	'He is at home.'
šufto bissuu'	šuftu fissuu'	'I saw him in the souk.'
naazliin bil'uteel	nazliin fil'uteel	'They are staying in the hotel.'
jiina bilbuusṭa	geena bil'utubiis (fil'utubiis)	'We came by bus.'
9indi šuʏul bilxaliij	9andi šuʏl filxaliij	'I have work in the Gulf.'
ili axx bissu9uudiyye	9andi axx fissu9udiyya	'I have a brother in Saudi Arabia.'

(6) /la/ (/li/)

/la/ in the Levantine dialect, /li/ in Egyptian, is used to mean 'to', 'toward'. Its use is obligatory in Levantine after a verb of motion, but it is usually omitted in this structure in Egyptian.

Levantine	Egyptian	
ruHit la lbeet	ruHt ilbeet	'I went home.'
rijiʕ la beeto	rigiʕ beetu	'He returned home.'
saafarna la fraansa	safirna faransa	'We traveled to France.'
la ween raayiH	raayiH feen	'Where are you going?'
ana jaay la ʕindak	ana gaay ʕandak	'I'm coming to your house.'

C. Other Words. Many of these words are auxiliary words which are frequent in occurrence and are easily misunderstood in rapid speech.

(1) 'thing'

The Levantine dialect uses the word /šii/ (/ašya/) to mean 'thing'; the Egyptian dialect uses /Haaga/(/Hagaat/). Phrases using these words are listed first.

Levantine	Egyptian	
šii	Haaga	'something, anything'
kull šii	kull[1] Haaga	'everything'
ayy šii	ayy[1] Haaga	'anything'
wala šii	wala Haaga	'nothing'
biddak šii	ʕaawiz Haaga	'Do you want anything?'
ma fii šii	ma-fii-š Haaga	'There isn't anything.'
jiblo šii	giblu Haaga	'Bring him something.'
btišrab šii baarid	tišrab Haaga saʕa*	'Would you like to drink something cold?'
šufna kull šii	šufna kull[1] Haaga	'We saw everything.'

*This word is used only to mean 'chilled'; the usual word for 'cold' is /bard/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
maa šufna wala šii	ma-šufnaa-š wala Haaga	'We didn't see anything at all.'
ayy šii mniiH	ayy[1] Haaga kwayyisa	'Anything is OK.'
štara ašya ktiire (ašya ktiir)	ištara Hagaat kitiir	'He bought many things.'

(2) 'very' 'much' 'completely'

The Levantine dialect uses /ktiir/ to mean 'very', 'much', or 'many', with adjectives and verbs. The Egyptian dialect uses /kitiir/ only to mean 'much' or 'many' after verbs and nouns, and it is not declined; Egyptian does not use this word to mean 'very'.

Both dialects use some other words for emphasis.

Levantine	Egyptian	
saafar iktiir	saafir kitiir	'He traveled a lot.'
ašya ktiire (ktiir)	Hagaat kitiir	'many things'
Hilu ktiir (ktiir Hilu)	Hilw[1] 'awi	'very pretty'
Hilu ktiir iktiir	Hilw[1] giddan	'very very pretty'
	Hilw[1] xaaliṣ	'extremely pretty'
beeto kbiir iktiir	beetu kibiir 'awi	'His house is very big.'
ana ta9baan iktiir	ana ta9baan giddan	'I'm very tired.'
miš zaki abadan (miš zaki bilmarra)	miš zaki abadan (miš zaki xaaliṣ)	'He's not intelligent at all.'
nsiithum bilmarra	nisithum xaaliṣ	'I completely forgot them.'

(3) 'like' 'similar to'

The Levantine word is /mitil/; the Egyptian word is /zayy/. Both can be suffixed with pronouns.

Levantine	Egyptian	
mítil šuu	zayy^{i} éeh	'Like what?'
mítil háyda	zayy^{i} da	'Like that one.'
mítilha	zayyáha	'like her'
mítilhum	zayyúhum	'like them'

(4) 'both'

In the Levantine dialect, the numeral /tneen/ is suffixed with a pronoun. In Egyptian, it is used separately with a pronoun.

Levantine	Egyptian	
tneenhum	humma l'itneen	'both of them'
tneenna	iHna l'itneen	'both of us'
tneenkum	intu l'itneen	'both of you'

(5) 'because'

The Levantine dialect uses the classicized word /li'ann-/ with suffixes, or the word /li'anno/ (in free variation) to mean 'because'. The Egyptian dialect uses /9ašaan/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
raaH li'anno mista9jil	raaH 9ašaan mista9gil	'He went because he was in a hurry.'
zi9il li'anna mit'axxriin	zi9il 9ašaan iHna mit'axxariin	'He got angry because we were late.'
leeš	9ašaan eeh	'What for?'
heek	9ašaan kida	'Because of that.'

(6) 'good' 'well'

The Levantine dialect uses the word /mniiH/ (/mniiHa/, /mnaaH/) to mean 'good' or 'well'; the Egyptian dialect uses /kwayyis/ (/kwayyisa/, /kwayyisiin/). In both dialects, the masculine form is used for the adverb.

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Levantine	Egyptian	
huwwe mniiH	huwwa kwayyis	'He is well.'
ilHaale mniiHa	ilHaala kwayyisa	'The situation is good.'
niHna mnaaH	iHna kwayyisiin	'We are fine.'
9imil iššuʏul imniiH	9amal iššuʏl kwayyis	'He did the work well.'

(7) 'like this' 'this way'

The Levantine dialect uses /heek/ to mean 'like this'; the Egyptian dialect uses /kida/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
ruuH heek	ruuH kida	'Go that way.'
heek	kida	'Really?'
miš heek	miš kida	'Isn't that right?'
leeš heek	išmi9na kida	'Why like that?'
bafakkir heek	aftikir kida	'I think so.'
kiif bit'uul heek	izzaay ti'uul kida	'How can you say that?'
heek (laheek)	9ašaan kida	'Because of that.'

(8) 'need' 'necessary' 'must'

In the Levantine dialect, the word /laazim/ may be used with pronoun suffixes to mean 'need', or with a verb to mean 'necessary'. In Egyptian, /laazim/ is not suffixed and only means 'necessary'; the active participle /miHtaag/ (/miHtaaga/, /miHtagiin/), used with the preposition /li/, is used to express 'need'.

Levantine	Egyptian	
haada laazim	da laazim	'That is necessary.'
laazim nimši	laazim nimši	'We must go.'
šuu laazmak	inta miHtaag li eeh	'What do you need?'
huwwe laazmo badle jdiide	huwwa miHtaag li badla gidiida	'He needs a new suit.'

(9) 'still' 'yet'

The Egyptian dialect uses /lissa/ to mean 'still' (in affirmative sentences) and 'yet' (in negative sentences). The Levantine dialect uses this word also (often with pronoun suffixes), but more often uses /ba9d-/ (with pronoun suffixes).

Levantine	Egyptian	
ba9dak hoon (lissaak hoon)	inta lissa hina	'Are you still here?'
ba9dna fi lubnaan	iHna lissa fi libnaan	'We are still in Lebanon.'
ba9do maa riji9 (lissa maa riji9)	lissa ma-rigi9-š	'He hasn't come back yet.'
lissa	lissa	'Not yet.'

(10) 'just'

The Levantine dialect uses /halla'/, 'now', before a past verb to express 'just'; the Egyptian dialect uses /lissa/. (Note the difference in translation here, where /lissa/ is used with an affirmative verb, compared with the translation in the previous section where it is used with a negative verb.)

Levantine	Egyptian	
halla' wiṣil	lissa wiṣil	'He just arrived.'
halla' šufto	lissa šuftu	'I just saw him.'

(11) 'by oneself' 'alone'

The Levantine dialect uses both phrases /la Haal-/ and /la waHd-/ with pronoun suffixes to mean 'by oneself' or 'alone'. The Egyptian dialect uses only the phrase /li waHd-/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
saafar la Haalo	saafir li waHdu	'He traveled alone.'
ruuH la Haalak	ruuH li waHdak	'Go by yourself.'
raaHu la waHidhum	raaHu li waHduhum	'They went by themselves.'
ajat la waHidha	gat li waHdaha	'She came alone.'

(12) 'belonging to'

The two dialects use similar words to mean 'belonging to' or 'of'; they are in fact from the same root word but in the Egyptian dialect the consonants have been transposed.

Levantine	Egyptian	
taba9	bitaa9	'belonging to (m)'
tab9at	bitaa9it	'belonging to (f)'
taba9iin; taba9	bituu9	'belonging to (p)'
ilbeet taba9 abuuy	ilbeet bitaa9 abuuya	'my father's house'
ilbeet taba9i	ilbeet bitaa9i	'my house'
issaa9a taba9ti	issaa9a bita9ti	'my watch'
ilkutub taba9 aHmad	ilkutub bituu9 aHmad	'Ahmad's books' (inanimate)
liwlaad taba9iini	ilwilaad bituu9i	'my children' (animate)
il'ašya taba9na	ilHagaat bitu9na	'our things' (inanimate)
il'ustaaz taba9kum	il'ustaaz bita9ku	'your (p) professor'

In the Egyptian dialect, when /bitaa9/ is followed by a pronoun which begins with /h-/, the consonant cluster /HH/ results:

bita9ha → bitaHHa 'belonging to her'
bita9hum → bitaHHum 'belonging to them'

(This is just a pronunciation guideline; pronouncing it in the 'original' way would not interfere with comprehension.)

(13) 'for the sake of'

The Levantine dialect uses /minšaan/ or /kurmaal/ with pronoun suffixes; the Egyptian dialect uses /9ašaan/ or /9ašaan xaaṭir/.

Levantine	Egyptian	
minšaanak; kurmaalak	9ašaan xaṭrak; 9ašaanak	'for your (m) sake'
minšaan aHmad	9ašaan xaaṭir aHmad	'for Ahmad's sake'
minšaanha	9ašaan xaaṭirha	'for her sake'

Levantine	Egyptian	
minšaan miin	9ašaan xaaṭir miin	'for whose sake?'
9milto minšaano	9amaltu 9ašaanu	'I did it for his sake.'

(14) 'several'

The Levantine dialect uses the words /9iddat/ with a plural noun and /kam/ or /šii kam/ with a singular noun; the Egyptian dialect uses /kaza/ with a singular noun.

Levantine	Egyptian	
9iddit marraat	kaza marra	'several times'
kam šaxiṣ (šii kam šaxiṣ)	kaza waaHid	'several persons'
kam šaxiṣ 'aluuli heek	kaza waaHid 'alli kida	'Several persons told me that.'

(15) 'to speak'

The Levantine dialect uses the verb /Haka, byiHki/ to mean 'speak'; the Egyptian dialect uses this word only to mean 'narrate', and the verb /itkallim, biyitkallim/ to mean 'speak'.

Levantine	Egyptian	
btiHki 9arabi	bititkallim 9arabi	'Do you speak Arabic?'
ana baHki šwayy	ana batkallim šwayya	'I speak a little.'
byiHki mniiH	biyitkallim kwayyis	'He speaks well.'

(16) 'to continue' 'to keep on'

The Levantine dialect uses the verb /ḍall, byḍill/ with another verb to mean 'to continue' (doing something); the Egyptian dialect uses the verb /fiḍil, biyifḍal/ with another verb.

Levantine	Egyptian	
ḍall yiHki	fiḍil yitkallim	'He kept on talking.'
ḍallat tis'al as'ile	fiḍlit tis'al as'ila	'She continued asking questions.'

(17) 'right here' 'here is' 'there is'

These words are used when pointing out something (like "voici" and "voilà" in French). The Levantine word is sometimes used with pronoun suffixes.

Levantine	Egyptian	
hayy	ahó	'here is (m)'
	ahé	'here is (f)'
	ahúm	'here are'
hayy huwwe liktaab	aho lkitaab	'/Right/ here is the book.'
hayy hiyye lbint	ahe lbint	'Here is the girl, There is the girl.'
hayyhum jayyiin	ahum gayyiin	'Here, they're coming.'
hayyak hoon	aho geet	'You're here!'

D. Idioms.

Some idioms exist in one dialect or the other.

(1) 'to be able' (Levantine)

The Lebanese dialect uses /fii-/ with pronoun suffixes to express 'to be able' or 'can' with verbs. (This is mostly found in Lebanon).

Levantine	Egyptian	
maa fiini	m-a'dar-š	'I can't.'
fiik ti9mal heek	ti'dar ti9mil kida	'Can you do that?'

(2) 'actually' (Egyptian)

The Egyptian dialect uses the word /aṣl-/ with pronoun suffixes to mean 'actually', 'in fact'. The closest equivalents in Levantine are /ilHa'ii'a/ or /bilHa'ii'a/, which are also used in Egyptian, or /Ha'ii'atan/, a classicism.

Levantine	Egyptian	
ilHa'ii'a nsiit	aṣli nisiit	'Actually, I forgot.'
bilHa'ii'a humme miš min hoon	humma aṣlúhum miš min hina	'The fact is, they're not from here.'
Ha'ii'atan huwwe majnuun	huwwa aṣlu magnuun	'To tell you the truth, he's crazy.'

(3) /xalaaṣ/ (Egyptian)

The word /xalaaṣ/ (/xalaṣ/ in Levantine) is used to mean 'finished' in both dialects. In Egyptian, it is also used with a verb to mean 'already'; there is no real equivalent in Levantine, except for the use of /ṣaar/ as a helping verb in a phrase.

Levantine	Egyptian	
ṣaar raayiH	raaH xalaaṣ	'He already went.'
ṣirt 9aamlo	9amaltu xalaaṣ	'I already did it.'
ṣaaru raayHiin	xalaaṣ mišyu	'They've already left.'

(4) /nifs-/ (Egyptian)

The Egyptian dialect uses this word, which takes pronoun suffixes, with verbs to mean 'I very much want', 'I am longing to' (do something). There is no real equivalent in Levantine.

Levantine	Egyptian	
jaay 9a baali asaafir la fraanṣa	nifsi asaafir faranṣa	'I am longing to go to France.'
ana mištaa' ašuufo	nifsi ašuufu	'I'm dying to see him.'
Habbiin inruuH	nifsína niruuH	'We really want to go.'

(5) /zamaan/ (Egyptian)

Both dialects use this word to express past time (as in /min zamaan/). The Egyptian dialect also uses this word with verbs, and the idea conveyed is rather complex. It implies that the action 'must have happened by now' or 'will happen any minute'. There is no equivalent in Levantine.

Levantine	Egyptian	
halla' jaay	zamaanu gaay	'He'll be here any minute'.
akiid bikuunu wiṣlu	zamanum wiṣlu	'They must have arrived by now.'

(6) /ummaal/ (Egyptian)

The Egyptian dialect uses this word to mean 'sure', 'certainly', 'obviously' in a statement, or 'well', 'well then', in a question.

Levantine	Egyptian	
walaw; lakaan	ummaal	'Obviously.'
ṭayyib šuu; lakaan šuu	ummaal eeh	'Well, what else?'
ma9luum	ummaal ṭab9an	'But of course!'

(Note that the pronunciation of /ummaal/ has an a as in 'father', although there are no consonants in the word to account for this.)

(7) /Hadd/ (Levantine)

The word /Hadd/ may be used as a preposition, with pronoun objects, to mean 'beside'.

Levantine	Egyptian	
saakniin Haddna (jambna)	sakniin gambína	'They live beside us.'
'a9ad Haddi (jambi)	'a9ad gambi	'He sat down beside me.'

V

SOCIAL SITUATIONS

Some social situations call for different standardized phrases or expressions, and many are exactly the same in both dialects. Only those which are different are presented here (in the masculine form).

(1) 'Hello' ... 'Hello'

Levantine		Egyptian	
marHaba ...	marHaba marHabteen	ahlan ...	ahlan ahlan biik
ahlan ...	ahlan fiik		

(2) 'How are you?' ... 'Fine, thanks.'

Levantine		Egyptian	
kiif Haalak ...	mniiH lHamdílla	izzayyak ...	kwayyis ilHamdu lillaah
kiifak ...	mabsuuṭ	izzaay issiHHa ...	
kiif ṣiHHtak...	lHamdílla	izzaay ṣiHHitak...	
kiif issiHHa...	álla ysállmak		

(3) 'Goodby ... 'Goodby'

Levantine	Egyptian
(person leaving)	(person going)
bxaaṭrak ... ma9i ssalaame	sa9iida ... ma9a ssalaama
(person staying)	(person staying)
ma9i ssalaame ... álla ysállmak	ma9a ssalaama ... allaah yisallímak

(4) 'Thanks' ... 'You're welcome.'

Levantine		Egyptian	
šukran ...	tikram (when doing a favor)	šukran ...	9afwan il9afw
mamnuunak ...	9afwan	marsii ...	
mamnuun ...	l9afu	marsii 'awi ...	
mersi mersi ktiir		šukran gaziilan ...	
		alf[1] šukr ...	

(5) Personal Titles

Levantine	Egyptian
(men)	(men)
ya siidi	ya siidi
ya ustaaz	ya ustaaz
Ḥáḍirtak	ya fandim
ya m9allim (usually lower status)	ya beeh Ḥaḍrítak
ya xawaaja (to Christians, esp. foreigners)	siyadtak
	ya usṭa (usually lower status)
(women)	ya raayis (usually lower status)
ya madaam	ya xawaaga (to Christians, esp. foreigners)
ya madmozeel	
ya sitt	(women)
ya aanisa	ya madaam
	ya mamzeel
	ya sitti
	ya haanim

VI

APPENDIX

A. Special Terms.

(1) Names of Months

The Levantine countries use their own names for the twelve months of the year; the Egyptian dialect uses names borrowed from English.

Levantine	Egyptian	
kaanuun taani	yanaayir	'January'
šbaaṭ	fibraayir	'February'
'adaar	maaris	'March'
niisaan	abriil	'April'
ayyaar	maayu	'May'
Hzeeraan	yunya	'June'
tammuuz	yulya	'July'
aab	ayusṭus	'August'
ayluul	sibtimbar	'September'
tišriin awwal	uktuubar	'October'
tišriin taani	nufimbar	'November'
kaanuun awwal	disimbar	'December'

(2) Currency Systems

Lebanon and Syria

(Units)

'irš, 'ruuš	'piastre'
liira, liiraat	'pound'

(Counting money)

xams i'ruuš	'5 piastres'
9ašar i'ruuš	'10 piastres'
rubu9 liira	'one-quarter pound'

nuṣṣ liira	'one-half pound'
tlat tirbaa9 illiira	'three-quarters of a pound'
liira	'one pound'
liirteen	'two pounds'
tlat liiraat	'three pounds'
Ḥda9š liira	'eleven pounds'

Jordan

(Units)

fils, fluus (filsaat) **	'fils'
(girš, gruuš)	'piastre'
diinaar, danaaniir	'dinar'

(Counting money)

xamse fluus (xams filsaat)	'5 fils'
(ta9riife)	('one-half piastre')
(nuṣṣ girš)	
9ašar fluus	'10 fils'
(girš)	(one piastre)
giršeen	'2 piastres'
xamse gruuš	'5 piastres'
9ašar gruuš	'10 piastres'
rubu9 diinaar	'one-fourth dinar'
(xamse w 9išriin girš)	('25 piastres')
nuṣṣ diinaar	'one-half dinar'
diinaar	'one dinar'
diinaareen	'two dinars'
tlat danaaniir	'three dinars'
iHda9šar diinaar	'eleven dinars'

** Note: While the money units are technically "fils" and "dinar", many speakers prefer to use the words "girš" and "leera". Ten fluus = 1 girš, so a 10-fils note is called "girš", a 20-fils note is "giršeen", etc. Some persons call a "dinar" a "leera" as well.

(Other terms)

šilin	5 piastres
bariize	10 piastres

Egypt

(Units)

'irš, 'uruuš	'piastre'
ginee, ginihaat	'pound'

(Counting Money)

malliim	'one milleme' (1/10 piastre)
itneen malliim	'two millemes'
ta9riifa	'one-half piastre'
'irš^{i} saay	'one piastre'
talat ta9riifa	'1 1/2 piastres'
'iršeen saay	'two piastres'
talaata saay	'three piastres'
9ašara saay	'ten piastres'
Hiḍaašar 'irš	'eleven piastres'
ginee	'one pound'
itneen ginee	'two pounds'
talaata ginee	'three pounds'
rub9^{i} ginee	'one-fourth pound'
nuṣṣ^{i} ginee	'one-half pound'

(Other Terms)

šilin	5-piastre note
bariiza	10-piastre note
nikla	2 millemes

B. Glossary.

The Glossary includes some basic words (not discussed above) which are so different in the two dialects that their meaning may not be easily guessed. Some sets of words are presented by category.

1. Foods.

English	Levantine	Egyptian
artichoke	arḍi šooki	xaršuuf
bread	xubz	9eeš
cabbage	malfuuf	karamb
chicken	jaaje (-aat); farruuj (frariij)	farxa (firaax)
ice cream	buuẓa	jilaati
milk (sweet)	Haliib	laban
mustard	xardal	muṣtarda
peaches	durraa'	xoox
pears	injaaṣ	kummitra
plums	xoox	bar'uu'
potato	baṭaaṭa	baṭaaṭis
shrimp	'reedis	gambari
tomato	banaduura	ṭamaaṭim; uuṭa
turkey	diik Habaš	diik ruumi
yogurt	laban	laban zabaadi

2. Household Words.

English	Levantine	Egyptian
bed	farše (-aat) (fraaš)	siriir (saraayir)
closet	xazaane (-aat)	dulaab (dawaliib)
drapery	burdaaye (-aat) (baraadi)	sitaara (sataayir)
furniture	farš; 9afš	9afš; asaas

English	Levantine	Egyptian
hall, hallway	mamša (mamaaši)	ṭur'a (-aat)
plate	ṣaHan (ṣHuun)	ṭaba' (ṭubaa')
refrigerator	barraad (-aat)	tallaaga (-aat)
room	ʏurfe (ʏuraf); uuḍa (uwaḍ)	ooḍa (uwaḍ)
table	ṭaawle (-aat)	ṭarabeeza (-aat)
tablecloth	šaršaf (šaraašif)	mafraš (mafaariš)

3. Clothing

English	Levantine	Egyptian
belt	zinnaar (znaaniir)	Hizaam (Hizima)
clothes	tyaab	hiduum
handkerchief	maHrame (maHaarim)	mandiil (manadiil)
necktie	kravaat (-aat); rabṭa (-aat)	karafatta (-aat)
overcoat	kabbuut (kababiit)	balṭu (balaaṭi)
shoes (men's)	ṣubbaaṭ (ṣababiiṭ)	gazma (gizam)
shoes (women's)	skarbiine (-aat); kundara (kanaadir)	gazma (gizam)
skirt	tannuura (tanaaniir)	juub (-aat); gunalla (-aat)
slippers	šaHHaaṭa (-aat)	šibšib (šabaašib)
stockings	kalse (-aat)	šuraab (-aat)
sweater	kanza (-aat)	buluufar (-aat)

4. Other Words.

English	Levantine	Egyptian
also	kamaan	kamaan; barḍuh; raaxar
always	daayman	dayman; tamalli
ashtray	manfaḍa (manaafiḍ)	ṭaffaaya (-aat)
bad	ʕaaṭil	wiHiš

English	Levantine	Egyptian
to begin	ballaš, biballiš	ibtada, biyibtidi
blanket	Hraam (-aat)	baṭaniyya (baṭaṭiin)
bottle	aniine (anaani)	izaaza (azaayiz)
boy	walad (wlaad); ṣabi (ṣibyaan)	walad (wilaad)
brakes (car)	freem (-aat)	farmala (faraamil)
breakfast	tirwii'a	fuṭuur
bridge	jisir (jsuura) (jusuur)	kubri (kabaari)
building	binaaye (-aat)	ɣimaara (-aat); mabna (mabaani)
butcher	laHHaam	gazzaar
car	sayyaara (-aat)	ɣarabiyya (-aat)
to catch, grab	kamaš, byikmiš	misik, biyimsik
to close	sakkar, bisakkir	'afal, biyi'fil
to cry	biki, byibki	ɣayyaṭ, biyɣayyaṭ
to curse	sabb, bisibb	šatam, biyištim
dozen	dazziine (-aat)	dasta (-aat)
ear	deene (dineen)	widn (widaan)
early	bakkiir	badri
to eat breakfast	itrawwa', byitrawwa'	fiṭir, biyifṭar
examination	faHis (fHuus)	imtiHaan (-aat); kašf (kušuuf)
facing, in front	'uddaam	'uddaam; 'uṣaad
first	awwal	awwil; awwilaani (-yya, -yiin)
floor (of building)	ṭaabi' (ṭawaabi')	door (adwaar)
gate	bawwaabe (-aat)	baab (abwaab)
heat (weather)	šoob	Harr
hot (weather)	mišwib; šoob	Harr
hotel	uteel (-aat)	uteel (-aat); lukanda (-aat)

English	Levantine	Egyptian
to hurry	rawwaj, birawwij; ista9jal, byista9jil	ista9gal, biyista9gil
last	aaxir	aaxir; axraani (-yya, -yiin)
to leave (behind)	tarak, byutruk	saab, biysiib
leg	ijir (ijreen)	rigl (rigleen)
letter	maktuub (makaatiib)	gawaab (-aat)
money	maṣaari	filuus
mouth	timm	bu''
newspaper	jariide (jaraayid)	gurnaal (garaayid)
now	halla'	dilwa'ti
of course	ma9luum; ṭab9an	ṭab9an
paint	booya; dhaan	buuya
pink	zahri	bamba
pitcher	brii' (abaarii')	abrii' (abarii')' šafša' (šafaaši')
place	makaan (amaakin); maHall (-aat)	makaan (amaakin); Hitta (Hitat)
to rain	šattat, bitšatti	maṭṭarit, bitmaṭṭar
round trip	rooHa raj9a	raayiH gayy
salary	ma9aaš (-aat); raatib (-aat)	maHiyya (-aat)
sick	mariiḍ (muraḍa)	9ayyaan (-iin)
swimming pool	birkit isbaaHa	Hammaam sibaaHa
telephone call	muxaabara (-aat)	mukalma (-aat)
tire	duulaab (dwaliib)	kawitš (-aat)
traffic	seer	muruur
traffic signal	wijhit isseer	išaara (-aat)
vacation	furṣa (furaṣ)	agaaza (-aat)

English	Levantine	Egyptian
wallet	juzdaan (jzadiin)	maHfaẓa (maHaafiẓ)
to watch	raa'ab, biraa'ib; itfarraj, byitfarraj (9ala)	itfarrag, biyitfarrag (9ala)
where from	min ween	min feen; mineen
woman	mara*(niswaan)*	sitt (-aat)
yes	aywa; ee na9am	aywa; aah

C. Variable Words in Dialects.

The Arabic dialects have tended to develop more different vocabulary words in some areas than others. Some words are different in nearly every dialect. With experience, you can predict the words which are more likely to have new forms, and you will save time and effort by identifying them early. For your guidance, here is a list of some of the words which vary the most widely.

Nouns

(foods)
(eating utensils)
(furniture)
(clothing)
(money terms)
(rooms)
ashtray
baggage
barber
basket
blanket
bottle
bridge
brush
car
cigarette
closet
corner
eyeglasses
fan
farm
garden
gun
letter
matches
office
tire
towel
umbrella
wages
wallet

Adjectives

bad
early
good
near
ready
sick
tired
well (health)

Verbs

ask
become
carry
close
do
fight
fill
find
finish
give
hurry
look at
open
shave
sleep
speak
take
think
want
work

* These words are insults in Egyptian.

Time Words

today

yesterday

tomorrow

last _____

next _____

(Prepositions)

(Demonstrative Pronouns)

(Question Words)

Other Words

(negative words)

future tense marker

progressive marker

(personal titles)

afterwards

also

although

always

because

here

if (two kinds)

in order to

much

nothing

now

of (belonging to)

OK

quickly

right away

same

similar to

slowly

still, yet

straight ahead

then

there

there is, there is not

very

yes

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☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1976 O—220-489

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